THE ASSOCIATE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

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Memorandum

To: Solicitor
Inspector General
Assistant Secretaries
Heads of Bureaus and Office

From: James E. Cason
Associate Deputy Secretary

Subject: Coordination of Conservation Grant Programs – Departmental Guidance

Each year, the Department of the Interior receives over $1 billion for conservation to be executed through grants and cooperative agreements. This striking total is depicted in the attached Bureau-by-Bureau list of these individualized investments in our lands, waters, and species. Examples of collaboration used with these funds range from the nationwide effort to improve national fish habitat to localized cooperative agreements with municipalities, land trusts, private landowners, and others. In order to maximize effective use of these funds, I am announcing a new tool to complement and spur even more strategic coordination.

This new coordination tool is entitled, "Departmental Guidance: Enhanced Conservation through Increased Grants Coordination" ("Guidance") and is attached, along with a more detailed Supplement for Fiscal Year 2008 ("2008 Supplement"). Last year, the Deputy Secretary formed a grants policy group, as well as a workgroup, to assess the state of conservation grant program coordination and make recommendations. While there are many ongoing efforts at coordination, the workgroup found that the Department needs a general but flexible rubric for identifying new opportunities and synergies for coordination. I view the attached Guidance as one tool to accomplish such strategic coordination of funding.

The concept behind the Guidance is simple: to encourage coordination where there is an added opportunity to support complementary conservation priorities. Coordination requires an agreed focal point. In applying their primary programmatic criteria to grant or cooperative agreement proposals, officials responsible for Federal financial assistance typically have discretion also to link secondary programmatic objectives to other conservation priorities of interest as focal points of coordination. Where there is no focal point yet, there is an opportunity to forge new links to conservation priorities of interest. The attached 2008 Supplement to the Guidance details potential linkages to conservation priorities that are already agreed to within the Department and its bureaus.

By issuing this Guidance and its 2008 Supplement, I request that your staff, in communicating and/or rendering decisions on grants and cooperative agreements, utilize them both - consistent with the established rules and policies for each program - and act on opportunities where grant and cooperative agreement criteria also match the identified conservation priorities.

Specifically, I ask that you distribute this Guidance and its Supplement, along with this memorandum, to all officials responsible for grants and cooperative agreements and designate a senior manager as a single point of contact in your headquarters office to coordinate follow-up. I also ask that you begin to give thought to the ways you might institutionalize this Guidance, as appropriate to your office or bureau (e.g. Director's Order, Instructional Memorandum or Internal Policy Document).

I want to emphasize that the goal of greater coordination can be accomplished without compromising the specific requirements of any program or greatly altering existing ongoing grant processes. Nothing in the process is intended to reduce existing program flexibility, effectiveness, or timeliness. Similarly, ongoing coordination (e.g. around specific species or locations) must not be affected negatively by the implementation of this Guidance.

The spirit of this Guidance is to provide another tool for bureaus to reach conservation aims. Its goal is enhanced coordination efforts that identify synergies, maximize benefits, and accomplish strategic planning and goals, all in support of conservation aims.

If you have questions, please contact Chris Schabacker, Director, Office of Policy Analysis at (202) 208-5978 or Chris_Schabacker@ios.doi.gov.

Attachments: List of Conservation Grant Programs at Interior
Departmental Guidance – Conservation Grants Coordination

cc: Deputy Secretary
DS-Chief of Staff
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Policy – International Affairs
Director, Office of Budget
Director, Office of Conservation Partnerships and Management Policies
Director, Office of Property and Acquisition Management